REMARKS

As required in the Office Action, Figs. 5-7 have now been labeled as PRIOR ART, and Replacement Sheets bearing those drawings are submitted herewith.

In the Office Action, the claims were rejected as being obvious in view of a hypothetical combination of the disclosures of the cited Hashimoto patent and the Yoneyama reference. In response, it is noted that independent Claim 1 has been amended and is believed to be patentable over the prior art.

In this regard, Claim 1 now requires a solid-state image pickup apparatus which includes an array of a plurality of pixel units, each unit including a plurality of photodiodes and one amplification transistor for receiving and outputting signals from the plurality of photodiodes. Claim 1 further requires a readout circuit that receives output signals from the pixel units, and that provides a difference signal with respect to a plurality of combinations of any two of first, second and third signals, the first signal corresponding to a reset level of the amplification transistor, the second signal corresponding to the first signal to which the signal of a first one of the plurality of photodiodes is added, and the third signal corresponding to the second signal to which the signal of a second one of the plurality of photodiodes is added. This is disclosed, e.g., at page 18, line 26 to page 20, line 6 of the Specification.

Applicant respectfully submits that these requirements of Claim 1 are not disclosed in the cited Hashimoto and Yoneyama references. As stated in the Office Action, the Hashimoto patent fails to disclose the third signal of the present invention, although this reference may disclose a pixel unit including a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements and a common amplification element. On the other hand, the Yoneyama reference discloses to perform a non-destructive read-out of an image pickup sensor a plurality of times to estimate a final output level of each photoelectric conversion element (pixel). Fig. 6 of this reference, referred to in the Office Action, shows changes of respective signal output levels of different photoelectric conversion elements (pixels), appearing during the non-destructive read-out of the plurality of times. However, this reference fails to teach that the signal level change of one pixel is provided by addition of a signal of another pixel and therefore Yoneyama does not teach the third signal recited in amended independent Claim 1.

For these various reasons it is seen that the cited Hashimoto and Yoneyama references, even when taken in combination, do not disclose the present invention as expressed in amended independent Claim 1. Accordingly, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is solicited for Claim 1 and its dependent claims.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,

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